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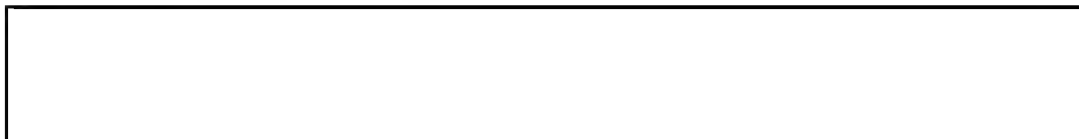
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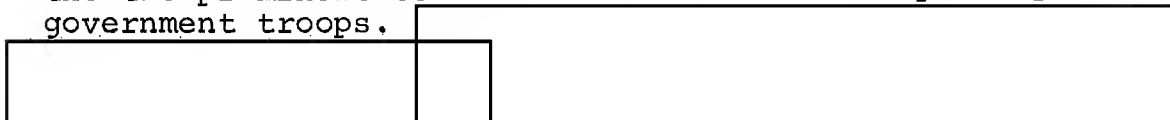
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[ Laos: Communist forces are closing in on the government's main base on the Plaine des Jarres.

The enemy subjected General Vang Pao's forward command post at Xieng Khouang airfield to sporadic mortar and rocket fire throughout 15 February. The North Vietnamese now dominate all the high ground on the northeast side of the Plaine. Government guerrillas yesterday lost their last outpost northeast of Nong Pet. The pullback there leaves no government forces which could harass Communist supply convoys transiting Route 7 in the general Khang Khay to Ban Ban region.

Southeast of the Plaine the situation is relatively quiet but enemy troops are reported to be moving into position against Phou Khe and Phou Gnouan, the two prominent terrain features still occupied by government troops.

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There are also signs of increased enemy activity near government positions defending the approaches to Vang Pao's headquarters at Long Tieng. Government troops some eight miles northeast of Long Tieng clashed with a small enemy force several days ago. There is no evidence to suggest that a significant enemy build up is under way, but any increase in enemy activity here is bound to distract Vang Pao's efforts against enemy operations in other more active areas.

Marginal visibility continues to impede effective tactical air support to government forces. Intensive air strikes have caused lingering secondary fires that contribute to the haze and smog overlying much of the Plaine. The enemy is well aware of this situation and may be awaiting a further deterioration of weather conditions before making an all-out drive against the Plaine.

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South Vietnam: South Vietnamese forces appear to have thwarted a major Communist push into the northern reaches of the Mekong Delta.

During the past ten days, government regular and territorial security forces have clashed with elements of the North Vietnamese 88th Regiment attempting to infiltrate through exposed terrain west of the provincial capital of Moc Hoa. In their blocking actions, the South Vietnamese have killed more than 200 enemy troops, while allied artillery and air strikes have probably caught many more enemy retreating toward Cambodian sanctuary. The regiment is believed to be trying to move to the relative security of Communist Base Area 470, a redoubt long used by the enemy to support military operations in the upper delta provinces.

Captured documents and prisoner interrogations have shed some light on the enemy's intentions in this area. They indicate that the 88th--one of five North Vietnamese regiments to move from III to IV corps since mid-1969--has the mission of coordinating with indigenous Viet Cong local forces in disrupting Vietnamization and pacification programs in Dinh Tuong Province, including attacks on the important provincial capital of My Tho. Other potential targets in the province are the former US 9th Division headquarters at Dong Tam, now the home of the South Vietnamese 7th Division, and defensive positions guarding Route 4--Saigon's lifeline to the delta.

The ability of North Vietnamese regulars to operate effectively in the northern delta, however, may be sorely taxed by the geographical realities of the region. The flat and often swampy terrain, laced with canals, offers little natural cover for concealment of large military units or for active supply lanes and storage areas.

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[ Jordan: Tension between the fedayeen and the government has lessened after King Husayn's press conference, but the situation could easily flare up again if the fedayeen push the King too hard.

Husayn at his press conference was generally conciliatory and clearly was seeking to cool down the situation. He sought to identify his motives and objectives with those of the fedayeen, and to attribute the eruption over his security decrees of 10 February to a "misunderstanding." At the same time there was an evident undertone of toughness in some of the King's remarks, particularly his emphasis on the necessity of maintaining law and order. Thus the King may balk if the fedayeen continue to press for complete abolition of the decrees.

The US Embassy feels that the King lost further ground to the fedayeen as a result of the press conference, but that it may be premature to conclude that he has surrendered. The Embassy believes that Husayn must act soon to reverse the present drift, however, if he wants to avoid further trouble.

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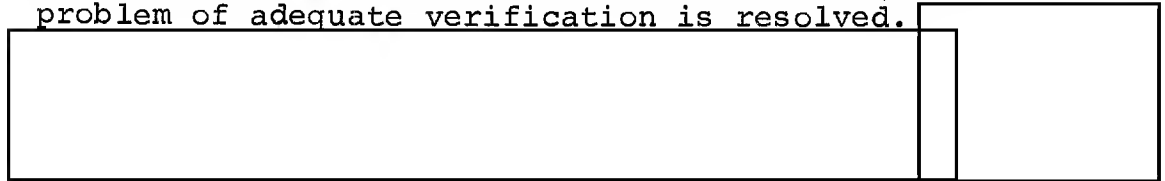
Arms Control: The US-USSR draft treaty to limit the use of the seabeds for military purposes will be the priority item before the Geneva disarmament talks that resume tomorrow.

The treaty failed to obtain the UN General Assembly's endorsement last fall because of objections to the lack of adequate verification arrangements and the fears of some countries that the terminology would jeopardize their maritime claims. The revisions proposed by the US to meet these problems have yet to be accepted by the Soviet Union and certain other countries.

Several initiatives on chemical and biological warfare (CBW) will also be considered. A Soviet draft convention would prohibit the development, production, and stockpiling of CBW agents and require the destruction of existing stocks. It is notably lacking in provision for verification. A British proposal, backed by the US, would prohibit the use of biological methods of warfare.

A number of states are likely to push hard at Geneva for a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing and for a cut-off of production of fissionable materials for use in nuclear weapons. Prospects for any agreement appear poor, however, until the problem of adequate verification is resolved.

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Spain-France: Spanish Foreign Minister Lopez Bravo's warm reception in Paris last week will contribute to closer relations and further Madrid's aim to play a larger role in international affairs.

The most noteworthy aspect of the visit was the signing of an agreement for Spanish purchase of 30 Mirage aircraft. A substantial amount of the work will be performed in Spain, with a consequent benefit to the Spanish economy.

According to both foreign ministers, the two countries were in almost total agreement on international questions. France will support Spain's wish to conclude a preferential trade agreement with the European Communities to be followed eventually by association and then membership.

Lopez Bravo emphasized to the French that in developing closer ties, Spain did not wish to detract from its cordial relations with its present allies. Spain may expect, however, that improved relations with France will help to avoid excessive dependence on the US and will increase Spain's bargaining power in the upcoming negotiations on the future of the joint bases in Spain.

The US defense attaché in Madrid believes that the heavy cost of the Mirage purchase may lead the Spaniards to ask that F-4s be supplied as part of military aid in the new agreement to be negotiated with the US. The Spanish Air Force still wants F-4s as part of its modernization program.

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Somalia: The beginning of a three-day religious holiday early this week could prompt demonstrations against the military regime. The government at this time has customarily distributed bonuses to government employees, including the army and police. This year, however, it has announced that no bonuses would be paid and that other economy measures would be made affecting the civil service. [REDACTED]

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Uruguay: President Pacheco has moved against a center of leftist opposition to his government by taking over control of the formerly autonomous secondary and vocational schools. The President acted to halt the deterioration of Uruguay's public education system and to lessen the political influence of leftist and Communist-dominated student and teacher organizations. Criticism has already been heard, from a usually progovernment newspaper as well as from the left, and the President's move against the traditionally autonomous educational system promises to become a hot political issue. Pacheco acted during a period of calm and with no visible immediate justification. [REDACTED]

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